

## Clifford White

Inducted CSHF: 1983  
Hometown: N/A  
Date of Birth: 1902  
Date of Death: March 8, 1964  
Affiliated Discipline(s): Builder, jumping  
Active Career Date(s): 1926-1948  
FIS Code: 11024  
Club: Mount Norquay Ski Club

Born in 1902 in Banff, Alberta, Clifford White was the oldest of four children born to the town's principal merchant. Cliff's love of skiing emerged in his teenage years learning to ski on barrel staves obtained from his father's store. As an ardent ski mountaineer, he would become the first to explore the Canadian Rockies in winter. It was his vision and enthusiasm that encouraged the development of Skoki, Temple (later Lake Louise), Norquay and Sunshine as internationally known ski areas.

His first real skis were for jumping but he soon appreciated that his skis were useful for purposes other than jumping. Around 1917, he, with a group of young, local enthusiasts, formed the Banff Ski Club, skiing the local pony trails, even ascending easier peaks and holding jumping competitions in conjunction with the Banff Winter Festival. By the mid-1920s, he and his companions were exploring the area's potential to support winter recreation as a business. In 1926 or 1927, he and others received permission from the national parks authorities to construct a lodge on Norquay Pass above the town of Banff with an admonition from the parks superintendent not to cut down every tree when clearing for runs. They left one, the "Lone Pine" which gave the run its name.

In 1928, the Norquay slopes were the venue for the Western Canadian Championship (Combined) Ski Tournament, a successful event attended by over 2,000 people. Always seeking good snow, it was recommended that he explore the potential of the Skoki area 16kms north-east of Lake Louise. It was there that he built the first wilderness lodge in the Rockies in 1929 and 1930.

In 1931, he brought a potential investor, Sir Norman Watson, to the Mount Temple area (Lake Louise). Sir Norman was persuaded to invest and by 1937-1938, the Mount Temple Chalet was finished while Clifford White was involved in cutting runs from the chalet to Silvertip Valley and Larch Hill. They were the first runs developed at the Lake Louise ski area.

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In March 1932, accompanied by two friends, he made an epic trip from Jasper to Lake Louise, crossing the Columbia Icefields and ascending the Snow Dome, a rigorous journey of some 320kms recorded in the 1932 Canadian Ski Annual.

In 1933, he and two others made a return trip on skis from Skoki to the Columbia Icefields, traversing the Molar Pass and Bow Summit.

By 1933, Clifford White had emerged as a talented photographer, his images recognized as examples of the best in mountain photography. A number of them were exhibited in the Banff Springs Hotel where they were seen and admired by his friend, Sir Norman Watson. He was invited to join an expedition to explore Mount Waddington in the British Columbia's Coastal Range but was unable to complete the journey because of an ankle injury. In a tribute to Clifford White, Watson commented that the 1932 Jasper-Lake Louise expedition "... must rank as one of the great feats of pioneer skiing in the Rockies, comparable with Sir Arnold Lunn's early work in the Bernese Oberland". He also spoke of White's "...unceasing battle with vested interests" and his success in persuading those vested interests that "...the skier, unlike a bird, cannot fly ten miles over timber to reach his snow-fields". It was "...due to this keen and persistent advocate of their rights (that skiers) have huts opened to their use (and) are welcomed in the Rockies".

His skill with a camera was recognized by the National Parks Branch as early as 1931 when he assisted in promotional filming with Parks Canada featuring the Skoki Valley, "Skiing in Cloudland", and again in a film featuring the Alpine skiing potential in Banff National Park, "Sunshine and Powder Snow".

It was in large part due to his vision and enthusiasm that Skoki, Temple, Norquay and Sunshine emerged as via areas for skiing. It has been said that he deserves more credit for bringing skiing as a sport to the Canadian Rockies than any other person.

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